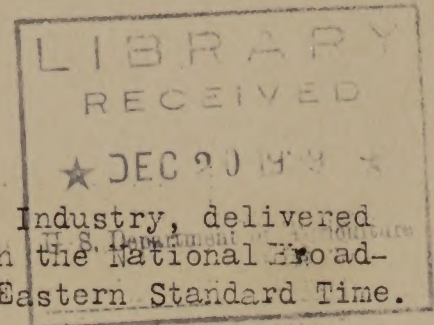


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PROGRESS IN BLISTER RUST CONTROL



A radio talk by Mr. J. F. Martin, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through Station WRC and 32 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, Monday, December 9, 1929 at 1:35 p. m. Eastern Standard Time.

I have been asked to tell you about the progress which has been made in the control of white pine blister rust. This is a highly important matter to people owning white pine, and in general, to all of us, because we all use the products of the forest in some form almost every day of our lives. The wood of the white pine has a wider variety of uses than most of our native forest trees, so that any disease which destroys our white pines directly affects all of us in one way or another.

We have reason to be thankful that we have made enough progress toward saving our half billion dollars' worth of white pine timber to encourage us to keep fighting until we bring this destroyer of our forests under complete control.

Fortunately, blister rust is one of those queer diseases that have to spend a part of their lives on two different plants. In this case, wild and cultivated currant and gooseberry bushes are the plants which spread the blister rust disease among the pines. It does not spread from pine to pine, but spreads from white pines to currants and gooseberries and from the currants and gooseberries back to the pine trees.

You ask: "How can such a disease be controlled"? Well - knowing the particular kinds of plants which spread the disease, all we have to do to protect the trees is to get rid of these plants.

Ordinarily, blister rust spreads only about 900 feet from currants and gooseberries to white pines. Therefore, this destructive disease can be controlled locally by destroying all currant and gooseberry bushes within 900 feet of valuable white pine trees.

The fight to banish these dangerous weeds from within and near valuable white pine areas has been going forward steadily since the Department in co-operation with the States concerned, started this campaign in 1922. Under joint Federal and State leadership the land owners in the Eastern States are eradicating wild currants and gooseberries on about 800,000 acres of pine producing lands each year. Up to the present time over 78 million wild currant and gooseberry plants have been destroyed on about seven and a half million acres of land at an average cost of 21 cents per acre. In the western United States good progress has been made in retarding the spread of the disease and in developing and applying effective control measures.

There are eight different species of white pine in this country, just one of which is in the East. The others are in the West. Two of the western species, the western white pine and the sugar pine, are highly valuable for commercial and forestry purposes. The other species at present are not used much for timber, but their scenic and watershed value is of considerable importance.

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Studies of old pine infection centers show that the blister rust disease has been in the East since 1898, while it is believed to have been introduced into the Pacific Northwest on a shipment of white pines from France about 1910. The disease is now present in the New England States, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon, and in several of the Canadian Provinces.

In time it will probably spread throughout the range of our native white pines. The main thing to bear in mind, however, is that the disease develops where white pines and currant and gooseberry plants occur on the same area. Control can be accomplished by eradicating all gooseberry and currant bushes on white pine areas. After control conditions have been established in this manner, they should be maintained by keeping those areas free from currant and gooseberry bushes.

If you want more facts about blister rust control, consult your State forester, or write to the United States Department of Agriculture for publications.